

SAUDI ARABIA | IN FOCUS

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SAUDI-U.S. RELATIONS

King Abdullah receives telephone call from U.S. President

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz received a telephone call on April 16 from U.S. President Barack Obama, who offered his condolences on the death of his sister, Princess Sita bint Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman. During the telephone conversation, the two leaders discussed Saudi-U.S. relations and regional developments, and the King thanked President Obama for his sentiments.

Chief of General Staff receives head of U.S. Central Command

The Chief of the General Staff, Gen. Saleh Al-Mohayya, received the head of U.S. Central Command, Gen. James N. Mattis, and his accompanying delegation in Riyadh on April 16. During the meeting, they exchanged cordial talks and discussed topics of bilateral interest. Gen. Mattis also met with Deputy Chief of the General Staff Lt. Gen. Hussein Al-Qabeel; Chief of the National Guard Prince Meteb bin Abdullah bin Abdulaziz; Assistant Minister of Defense and Aviation and Inspector General for Military Affairs Prince Khalid bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz; and Commander of the Royal Saudi Air Force Lt. Gen. Mohammed Al-Ayesh.

Saudi delegation attends global economic meetings in Washington

Finance ministers, central banks governors and other economic officials of member states of the Group of 20 (G-20) met in Washington on April 14. The Saudi delegation was led by Minister of Finance Dr. Ibrahim Al-Assaf and included Governor of the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) Dr. Mohammed Al-Jasser; Deputy President and Managing Director of the Saudi Development Fund Yusuf Al-Bassam; and a number of other senior officials.

On April 16, the Saudi delegation also attended the 23rd meeting of the International Monetary and Finance Committee of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington. Addressing the Committee, Dr. Al-Assaf stressed the strength and safety of the Saudi banking sector, which enjoys high profitability and financial solvency. Dr. Al-Assaf noted that the continuing strong performance of the Saudi economy, supported by large governmental investments in infrastructure projects and the social sector, has contributed to the increasing of IMF forecasts for Saudi economic growth this year. As for developments in the energy markets, the Minister of Finance reiterated the Kingdom's commitment to

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strengthening the stability of the oil market, for the benefit of producers and consumers alike, and supporting global economic growth. He commended the growing cooperation between oil producers and consumers, pointing specifically to the signing of the Charter of the International Energy Forum in Riyadh last February.

Finally, the delegation attended a meeting of the Development Committee of the World Bank in Washington on February 16 and 17. Delivering a speech, Dr. Al-Assaf stressed the impact of high food prices on global food security and called for the protection of the poor. He highlighted Saudi efforts in this regard, noting that the Kingdom helps poor countries increase their agricultural lands and contributes to regional and international development institutions.

ARAB WORLD

GCC Foreign Ministers call for peace in Yemen, condemn Iran

The Foreign Ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states held their 33rd extraordinary session in Riyadh on April 17, during which they discussed the GCC initiative to end the crisis in Yemen. The meeting was attended by a delegation from the Yemeni opposition, led by President of the Preparatory Committee for National Dialogue Mohamed Salem Basendwah. In a statement released afterwards, GCC Secretary General Dr. Abdulatif Al-Zayani said that talks are ongoing with both the Yemeni government and the opposition. The goal is to end the bloodshed in Yemen, he stated, and to reach a compromise within the framework of the GCC's previously announced initiative.

In a separate statement, the GCC Foreign Ministerial Council praised the positive developments that have taken place recently in Bahrain, particularly the restoration of security. The ministers rejected Iran's false allegations regarding Bahrain and condemned its malicious interference into the affairs of its Arab neighbors. Furthermore, the Council called upon the international community, led by the U.N. Security Council, to take all necessary measures to end Iranian interventions, provocations and threats that seek to foment sedition and subversion within the GCC states.

Saudi Initiative to Combat AIDS in GCC Countries inaugurated

Minister of Health Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeeah inaugurated the Saudi Initiative to Combat AIDS in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries at a ceremony April 16 in Riyadh. The initiative was organized by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Executive Board of the GCC Health Ministers Council. Addressing the gathering, Dr. Al-Rabeeah emphasized the commitment of the GCC Ministries of Health to supporting programs to combat the spread of AIDS and to provide all possible means of health care to treat the virus.

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